

Duxbury Clipper, Thursday, July 3, 1980

Bartlett Holmes - 1803

Lot Hunt of Duxbury, yeoman, sold a small lot of land to Bartlett Holmes of Duxbury, sailmaker, for \$50 in 1803. It was on the west side of the newly laid out Washington St. In 1806, a deed describes land laid out for the use of a new road to the meetinghouse, which indicates when that part of Surplus St., at right angles to Washington St., came into existence. It was here that Bartlett Holmes built a substantial house which he sold to John Holmes and Ichabod Peterson, both of Duxbury in 1804. Obviously, Bartlett and his wife, Sally Winsor Holmes, never occupied it. The piece of property which contained but 81 square rods plus the house sold for \$1143. Whether Bartlett built it for himself and changed his plans or whether he built it with John in mind, we may never know. Perhaps he intended it for 2 families to share.

The lives of the new owners were ill-fated. When Ichabod died in 1805, at the age of 24, his father, Reuben Peterson, sold his share of the house to John for \$571.50, from which it can be gathered that the relationship of John and Ichabod was on a strictly business basis. John Holmes, captain of a ship sailing from Lisbon to Boston, was lost at sea. There seems to be some doubt of the exact date though it is recorded that he was 32 years old. At any rate, in April 1808, his probate was filed with Polly, his wife, being assigned dower interest for life which consisted of the southerly half of the house and land, fortunately described in some detail. John's only daughter, Sarah, was the other heir.

In 1808, Polly married Captain Joseph Prior Jr., a widower and neighbor. She and Sarah moved into his home and in 1813, as Sarah's guardian, Joseph sold Captain John Holmes' house at the corner of Washington and Surplus streets for \$900 for "the

payment of her debts and support and education and incidental charges."

The new owner was Seth Sprague, a prosperous shipbuilder who lived on Harrison St. on the property which is now the golf course. Seth had 15 children and the Holmes house was occupied by various married members of the Sprague family during the years until 1847. When Seth's probate was filed then, he left the house as part of his estate. His heirs sold to Studley Sampson in 1859, and it remained in that name until the heirs of Studley's wife, Ellen, sold it to Paul Burns in 1926. It has changed hands a number of times since then, usually being occupied by the owners themselves.

The house is a raised frame Cape style fitting tightly into the corner of the roads and facing east on Washington St. The interior is unusual. Instead of the central chimney typical of the era there are 2 separate chimneys with a hallway between which leads from the front door through to the original kitchen and which boasts of a straight, much larger staircase than is ordinarily found in this type of architecture. This is made possible in the space otherwise taken up by the central chimney. There is also a jog in the hall by the front door which makes the hall seem more spacious.

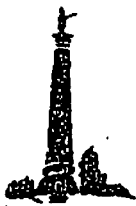
The second floor has a fairly large hall with a dormer window over the front door, said window probably built with the original house. Around 1900, 2 more dormers were added in front and now there are 2 in back. The southerly chamber extends the length of the house as it must have done when it was assigned to Polly as part of her dower interest.

Basically, the house has not changed with its 2 front rooms and original kitchen in back of them with small rooms on either side of it. The fireplace in which Polly cooked in her kitchen is no longer in sight but the room is notable for the fact that it contains 10 doors. It is now a beautiful dining room with one of the doors on the west side leading to an ell which is now the modern kitchen.

It is a house which strikes one as being of solid construction, good hardware and wide floorboards rather than having fancy decorative touches. But outstanding is the care and thought that went into planning the 2 chimneys and interesting hallway. One might surmise that it had started out as half a Cape but records prove otherwise.

Bartlett Holmes built it as it remains today, standing snugly on the small corner lot: a lovely old house cherished and enjoyed by its present owners, Dr. and Mrs. D. Justin McCarthy.

Virginia Seaver, Researcher
Date Board Committee
Duxbury Rural & Historical Society



Duxbury Realty Co.
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